

Service Coordination in the Department of Social and Health Services

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

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STATE OF WASHINGTON
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND
REVIEW COMMITTEE

STUDY TEAM

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WHY AN ANALYSIS OF DSHS SERVICE COORDINATION?

The Legislature created the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in 1970 to establish an organization that would “provide for maximum efficiency of operation” and that would “integrate and coordinate all those activities involving provision of care for individuals who, as a result of their economic, social or health condition, require financial assistance, institutional care, rehabilitation or other social and health services.” With 18,000 employees and annual expenditures of \$8.5 billion, it has the largest agency budget in State government.¹

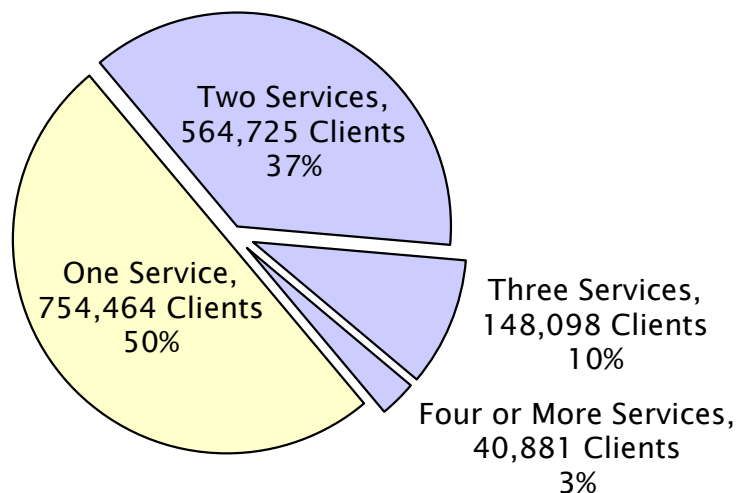
Recent DSHS efforts at enhancing service coordination include the **No Wrong Door** initiative. Begun in November of 2000, its focus was on coordinating services for “shared” clients—those who use services from more than one part of the Department. Such efforts advertise service coordination as a guiding principle of DSHS. This JLARC sponsored project will review current efforts by DSHS to coordinate or integrate services for clients.

BACKGROUND

Twenty-five percent of the state's population use DSHS services, ranging from 43 percent of the population of Adams County to 16.5 percent of the population of San Juan County. A broad variety of services are provided, including: medical, vocational, income support, drug counseling, mental health, foster care, juvenile rehabilitation, in-home services for adults, and child care.

One-half of the 1.5 million people receiving services from DSHS get services from more than one part of the Department. For instance, 99 percent of the clients of the Aging and Disabilities Services Administration also receive services through the Health and Recovery Services Administration (formerly known as the Medical Assistance Administration).

Fifty Percent of DSHS's 1.5 Million Clients Receive More Than One Service from the Department



Source: Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. Client data for State Fiscal Year 2003.

¹ The Legislature's stated purpose in creating DSHS is contained in Chapter 43.20A.010 of the Revised Code of Washington. The expenditure total of \$8.5 billion is all fund sources, combined Capital and Operating budgets.

Receiving services from multiple parts of the Department creates coordination challenges. In simple terms, must clients provide the same information to different parts of DSHS, creating inefficiencies for both the client and DSHS? More importantly, do clients have multiple case managers that provide complementing or conflicting services?

STUDY SCOPE

This study will examine current DSHS initiatives to improve service coordination and integration. Efforts in other states or local governments will be reviewed in an attempt to develop service coordination benchmarks.

OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE ANALYSIS

The analysis will seek answers to the following questions:

- What recent and current efforts has DSHS undertaken to improve service coordination and integration?
- How does DSHS get feedback from clients on service coordination?
- Are there efforts underway geared at improving information systems to enhance coordination?
- What service coordination efforts in other state or local governments exist that might establish benchmarks for gauging DSHS efforts?

The analysis will also review efforts sponsored by organizations such as the National Governors Association to enhance services coordination and will attempt to develop a common set of terms or phrases to help evaluate efforts at improving service delivery efficiency.

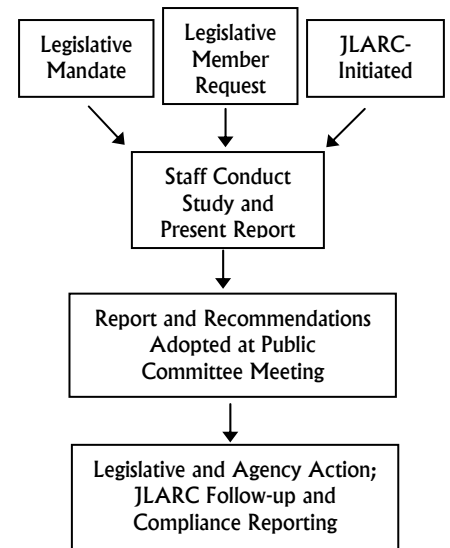
TIMEFRAME FOR THE STUDY

Preliminary report by June 2006.

JLARC STAFF CONTACT FOR THE STUDY

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JLARC Study Process



Criteria for Establishing JLARC Work Program Priorities

- Is study consistent with JLARC mission? Is it mandated?
- Is this an area of significant fiscal or program impact, a major policy issue facing the state, or otherwise of compelling public interest?
- Will there likely be substantive findings and recommendations?
- Is this the best use of JLARC resources: For example:
 - Is the JLARC the most appropriate agency to perform the work?
 - Would the study be nonduplicating?
 - Would this study be cost-effective compared to other projects (e.g., larger, more substantive studies take longer and cost more, but might also yield more useful results)?
- Is funding available to carry out the project?